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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2009

In Today's Papers

Atalay Meets Kurtulmus and Journalists Regarding The 'Kurdish Initiative'

Media outlets report that within the framework of his ruling AKP's 'Kurdish Initiative,' Interior Minister Besir Atalay met yesterday with the Islamist Saadet Party (SP) leader Numan Kurtulmus. Kurtulmus said he submitted to Atalay a project for the resolution of Turkey's Kurdish question. He said the state should cease routine security operations against the PKK, and the PKK should lay down its weapons. After meeting Kurtulmus, Atalay went to Istanbul to hold a meeting with writers, academics, and journalists. Atalay said after the meeting that the government's opening was based on "thorough research" about the situation in the region. Atalay later told the press he expected to wrap up his meetings by the end of the week. Papers report Atalay will meet Tuesday with the representatives of Turkey's leading business grouping TUSIAD and the leftist labor union DISK to discuss his government's 'democratic move.'

The Barzanis 'Closely Follow' the 'Kurdish Initiative' in Turkey
Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) leader Massoud Barzani was "closely following" the AKP government's 'Kurdish Initiative.' Barzani wants a formula to be found for the PKK defectors who earlier took shelter with the KRG. Barzani estimates there are around 5,000 "refugee terrorists" living in northern Iraq. The KRG wants some 11,000 Turkish citizens staying at Camp Makhmur to return to Turkey, according to Cumhuriyet.

Meanwhile, Islamist-oriented Zaman reports the KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani called on "all to back the Kurdish initiative in Turkey." "We support President Gul and PM Erdogan's statements on the matter. We hope the other political parties in Turkey will also support this initiative," said Barzani. He added the initiative would contribute to the stability in Iraq and the Middle East, saying "A peaceful solution in Turkey will help other peaceful solutions in the region."

Editorial Debate on Kurdish Initiative

Erdal Safak wrote in mainstream Sabah: "When DTP sent its views to PKK's imprisoned leader Ocalan, the list of ideas covered a constitutional guarantee for ethnic differences and the PKK to be a part of political process. In the end, Ocalan's revised version contained even stronger demands, including a federal structure which no government can even dare to think about. At this point, everybody should act reasonably and in a sensible manner for a successful outcome of this process."

Ismet Berkan wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "Even though Ocalan is someone who should be listened to, his recent ideas go beyond the acceptable limits. What he is envisioning is an ethnic-based republic which is impossible. Kurds and their leaders should better focus on freedom and equality for everyone formula which can serve as common ground for all."

Yasemin Congar wrote in leftist Taraf: "Ocalan is expected to put forward his road map officially through his lawyers. Worried about opposition parties reaction, the government is thinking of preventing its dissemination. That is a very wrong approach. The government and state institutions are not supposed to shape the policy line based on Ocalan's ideas, however the value of creating a climate for lively debate among Kurds along with these ideas should not be underestimated."

Tamer Korkmaz wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "Unlike previous attempts, this time there is a proper ground to address the Kurdish issue. The state has a strategy as well as power to implement a project. This time it is going to happen through internal dynamics as opposed to foreigners imposing their terms,

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such as America. The U.S. has lost the war in Iraq and Turkey has emerged as regional power in due course. Thus Turkey has the power, energy and influence to go ahead through its own dynamics."

Martyrs' Families Give Message by Laying A Black Wreath at the AKP Headquarters
Hurriyet, Sabah, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Vatan, Radikal, Posta and others: Today's papers extensively cover the protests by the martyrs' families to the government's Kurdish initiative. Mainstream papers Vatan and Milliyet report that the families of the martyrs laid a black wreath at the AKP headquarters in Ankara to protest the government's Kurdish initiative and then visited the opposition parties CHP and MHP for support. The families wanted to talk to Prime Minister Erdogan, but reports indicate AK party officials told the families that Erdogan was not at the headquarters but one of his deputies could listen to the families' problems. However, the families rejected the offer and said they will not talk to anyone but Erdogan. Following a protesting speech and laying a black wreath in front of the AKP headquarters, the families went to visit their sons' cemeteries. Hurriyet says a group of families of the martyrs' visited opposition party MHP headquarters yesterday and conveyed their reaction to the AKP's Kurdish initiative to the MHP officials. After listening to the families, MHP deputy chair Oktay Vural told the journalists "It is a shame for this nation to accept a terrorist organization's suggestions. Shame on the government and the Prime Minister for taking a copy of the road map prepared by the jailed terrorist leader, and acting accordingly." Meanwhile, another group of the families visited the main opposition CHP headquarters and conveyed their request for the opposition parties to talk on their behalf. CHP deputy Secretary General Algan Hacaloglu received the families and said "the CHP is against all kinds of initiatives which take the PKK terror organization as interlocutor."

In an interview to Cumhuriyet daily, main opposition CHP's Deputy Chairman Onur Oymen criticized the AKP government for "making reconciliation talks with terrorists." Reminding the government's earlier records, Oymen said "There are already enough faults in the AKP's history. They are branded by the Constitutional Court as a center for anti-secular acts. And now they are in efforts to destroy fundamental values of Turkey, such as national unity, national identity as well as nation-state model." Oymen added that CHP will not talk with the government on Kurdish initiative unless a concrete plan or project has been put forward.

10 Years of Earthquake Funds Unaccounted For (Vatan)

Mainstream Vatan reports that following the Marmara earthquake in 1999, a total of \$16 billion and surtaxes have been collected from the people. Nearly \$3.5 billion came as the foreign aid. But still thousands of hospital and school buildings await to be restored. Now people ask where have all the money gone? Four governments have come to power in ten years but they never explained how they used these taxes. There are speculations that billions of dollars were used to patch budget gaps. Recently, the main opposition party CHP gave a questionnaire motion to the parliament for the whereabouts of the earthquake taxes.

Eight Inmates to be sent to Imrali Prison

Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports the government decided to transfer eight prisoners to Imrali prison where the PKK's head Abdullah Ocalan is serving his sentence. Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin said they would decide, according to the laws, which convicts would be transferred, adding that only the convicts who received life sentences without parole would be sent to Imrali.

Turkey's EU Secretariat to Employ Armenian Turks (Hurriyet)

Mainstream Hurriyet reports Turkey's 'Secretariat-General for EU Affairs' will employ researchers and translators of Armenian heritage, who will be "pre-selected" by the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul. "We are seeking young people from the Armenian community who are willing to work at the Secretariat-General for EU

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Affairs," says an announcement on the webpage of the patriarchate. Burak Erdemir, Deputy Secretary-General for EU Affairs, said, "We have no employees coming from the minority groups; we need people from all segments of our social structure."

Terror Has Struck the Caucasus (Hurriyet)

Media carry straightforward reports indicating a suicide bomber set off an explosion that killed at least 20 at a police building in Russia's Ingushetia province yesterday. Leftist Taraf calls the attack, "A Bomb Attack Against the Ingush Police." Mainstream Milliyet notes the Ingush leader accused Islamist militants of bearing responsibility for the attacks. In "The New Address for Tension: Ingushetia," Islamist-oriented Zaman emphasizes the rising tide of violence in Ingushetia constitutes, "the most important security problem for Moscow to resolve," and the situation, "weakens Russia's policy for the Caucasus region."

Operation Reliant Mermaid Angers Iran

In "Military Exercises Anger Iran," mainstream Milliyet reports Iranian President Ahmadinejad has expressed outrage at Operation Reliant Mermaid, a search and rescue exercise initiated yesterday by Turkey, the U.S. and Israel in the eastern Mediterranean. In a speech in Tehran on Sunday, Ahmadinejad made a reference to Turkey when he said, "Some of our neighbors have adopted policies which serve the interests of the Zionists." In addition, Milliyet reports he said, "We are sorry for those countries around us and those neighbors who are at the service of the Zionists and are providing means for Israel's hegemony over the world. They don't understand that they are facilitating the Zionists. We hope they will one day wake up." The exercises started yesterday and will continue until Friday. A total of eight ships, four helicopters and three search and rescue planes from all three countries are participating in the exercises.

A New Incirlik Base in Northern Iraq (Aksam)

Media outlets report the commander of American Forces in Iraq, General Ray Odierno, said American troops could be deployed in the "problematic areas" in the northern parts of Iraq in order to work with the Iraqi government and local forces to secure the safety of the villages on the border areas between the Arabs and Kurds as "a confidence building measure." In "A New Incirlik Base In Northern Iraq," mainstream Aksam reports the U.S. is considering troop deployment around the Mosul-Kirkuk region. Under the headline, "The U.S. Seeks Troop Deployment in Northern Iraq," Islamist-oriented Zaman reports General Odierno stated American soldiers would work as "peacekeeping forces" between the "Arab and Kurd rivals in the region." In "We Want to Stay in Northern Iraq," leftist-nationalist

Cumhuriyet reports General Odierno said the U.S. plan for deployment would be discussed at a three-party meeting with the central Iraqi government and the Kurdish Regional Government in Baghdad to be held in September. Mainstream Hurriyet headlines, "The Johnnies (Are Going) To Kerkuk," and the paper reports "Disagreements over petrol," and other issues are "creating fears of new ethnic tensions between Kurds and Arabs in northern Iraq."

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- Four soldiers were killed when a hand grenade exploded accidentally on one of them in the eastern province of Elazig.
- One person is killed and 37 others are injured in explosion in a fireworks factory in the province of Sakarya.
- Turkish unemployment rate has been declining over the past three months. Turkey drops from the third to the fifth place in the international unemployment ranking.
- 15 academics in Mardin's Artuklu University participate in Kurdish language courses opened by the university while awaiting the

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response of the Higher Education Board (YOK) for opening a Kurdish language and literature department in the university.

- Turkey's National Security Council (MGK) will hold a meeting on August 20.
- Turkey is to introduce big penalties for downloading of music and films on the Internet, acts that violate copyright laws.
- The number of civil servants in Turkey increases by 25,000 over the April-June period and reaches 2.9 million.
- On Wednesday, PM Erdogan will inaugurate Turkey's biggest marina in the Mediterranean tourist town of Didim.

World

- Richard Holbrooke, President Obama's special representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan, will join the meeting of the "Friends of Democratic Pakistan" to be held in Istanbul on August 24-25.
- An accident during repair work at Russia's largest hydroelectric plant kills at least 10 workers, while as many as 65 others are injured.
- Militiamen are torturing and killing gay Iraqi men in a systematic campaign that has spread from Baghdad to several other cities, the New York based Human Rights Watch said in a report.
- Employees at Dimona nuclear reactor in Israel reportedly have been forced to drink uranium as part of an experiment.
- Turks in Belgium stage protests to denounce the killing of a Turkish inmate in Jamioulx Prison.

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